3
33

LOUISIANA conservationist

november—december, 1971

Clark M. Hoffpauer

...comments

My best of wishes for your merry Christmases and your happy New Years, your long lives and your true prosperities. Worth twenty pounds good if they are delivered as I send them. Remember? Here's a final prescription added, "To be taken for life."

—Charles Dickens

This prescription by Dickens is one that certainly never could be filled by any druggist; but the sentiment is there for the approaching holiday season and those to come in future years. The members of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission join with me in wishing everyone a warm holiday season, and a New Year filled with accomplishment, satisfaction, health and measures of prosperity associated with the American way of life.

As we move along in the months that are marked by special holidays, it might be well for us to reflect on what is ahead in November and December. There's Thanksgiving, characterized by the gathering of families and the traditional feast for the fortunate. For those less fortunate, there is a warmth about this special day that is deeper than the satisfaction of a table heavily laden with food.

Later, there is Christmas, marked by anticipation laced with the hustle and bustle found for days prior to no other singled holiday. It is a special day in that it is marked with joyous celebration, but underscored with deep religious significance through Christendom.

Then there is New Year's Eve when we bid farewell to an old year and face the many challenges and tasks of a new one. After New Year's Day, it is time to settle down and tuck the special events of the holiday season away to be savored in memory. There is work ahead that must be done.

For outsdoorsmen, these are the abundant months. There is so much to be done afield and afloat that sportsmen are often faced with the pleasant difficulty of deciding what outdoor activity they will pursue. If making such a decision is a chore it is only because Louisiana is one of the few states in the country that offers virtually six months of hunting, starting with doves in early September and ending with the wild turkey hunting season in the spring.

November and December offer what will possibly be one of the best deer hunting seasons ever held in Louisiana. It will extend into early January and we anticipate that the bag of 53,271 deer taken during the 1969-70 season will be exceeded, perhaps by as many as a thousand deer.

Waterfowlers are anticipating a duck season as good, or slightly better, than last year. It is a split season and the two segments will cover the major holiday periods, offering ample opportunity for hunting during the holidays.

Fortunately, there was an excellent hatch of ducks this spring on the nesting grounds, and fall and winter flights are visual proof that good conditions on the nesting grounds and adequate wintering grounds will assure the traditional sport of waterfowling for future generations.

In addition to deer, duck, goose and coot hunting, Louisiana also has excellent squirrel and rabbit hunting; along with quail hunting that should be on a par with last year. There is also rail hunting and still the third and final segment of the dove hunting season.

Hunters are not the only persons who look upon these two months with special anticipation other than the holidays themselves and the significance of those special days. Fishermen are as eager, because Louisiana offers unexcelled winter fishing, both in the gulf and in the lacework of coastal bays, bayous, canals and lakes.

For inland coastal fishermen there are speckled trout, flounders, redfish, sheepshead, drum and croakers. In the gulf, there are species ranging from platinum and gold pompano to the highly sought red snappers.

In short, there is much to be thankful for and joyous about. It is with this knowledge in mind that we wish you a very happy holiday season.

LOUISIANA conservationist

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I give my pledge as an American to
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IN THIS ISSUE

Down Where the Flyway Ends **5**
Shellshot Reloading, Anyone Can Do It **11**
Recipes by Leon Ricord **18**
Flourishing Forests Threaten Wildlife **22**
Ibises in Louisiana **28**

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Photo by [illegible]

DOWN WHERE THE FLYWAY ENDS

STORY BY MCFADDEN DUFFY

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT DUCK HUNTING IN LOUISIANA THAT AROUSES THE ENVY OF WATERFOWLERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. It is difficult to pinpoint just why this is true, yet that envy is noticeable in any discussion of duck hunting taking place with persons from other states. It can be detected in conversation with non-resident waterfowlers, and often is visible on their faces.

Ducks do not come that easy in Louisiana, even though the state is host of millions of feathered migrants during the late fall and winter months. Waterfowl hunting in the state probably calls for more gear, equipment and tedious travel than is necessary in most of the other duck hunting states in the country. Then why the envy, and even public challenge, when Louisiana waterfowlers make recommendations about seasons and bag limits that are biologically sound, and in the best interest of the waterfowl resource.

Perhaps it stems from the fact that Louisiana duck hunters are shooting down where two flyways end, in the hundreds of thousands of acres of gold and green marshlands making up the key wintering habitat for a continent's waterfowl resource.

Reference to the Mississippi Flyway is made in the true sense and has no connection with the boundaries of states that are lumped together in four neat packages for administrative purposes.

Opposite Page—A pair of mallards vault from the surface and become airborne. This is accomplished by literally thrusting themselves into the air with a powerful stroke of their wings.

Below—Duck hunters head toward their blind in a pirogue. This unique craft is the prime mover in the bayou country and the all-time favorite of Louisiana duck hunters in marshland hunting

Lloyd Poissenot

Ironically, perhaps, these four administrative flyways which only vaguely trace the traditional southward migration of ducks have for several decades been presented to duck hunters as true flyways, warranting different regulations, seasons and bag limits.

At the same time waterfowl biologists readily admit that ducks do not know the boundaries of the four flyways that were designated for administrative purposes as they crisscross back and forth in their southward migrations, following ancestral, if sometimes vague, routes to their wintering grounds.

Perhaps this almost national envy of Louisiana stems from a secret yen to someday hunt ducks down where the continental flyway ends. And that hidden yen and often open envy comes to light in punitive thinking regarding most proposals concerning waterfowl that are made by the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission.

Geographically, Louisiana is one of the most important states in providing wintering habitat for waterfowl. It follows naturally

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Top Photo—Tossing out the decoys properly is the initial step for the waterfowler. Ducks decoy into the wind and this is an important thing for hunters to remember in placing their decoys.

Immediately Above—With decoys placed and properly spaced to resemble a small group of ducks feeding near the blind, this hunter is ready to hide in his blind and prepare for incoming flights of ducks.

Top Right—Wild ducks in flight is a sight that stirs the pulses of waterfowlers and makes them crouch in their blinds with baited breath awaiting the first ducks that respond to calling and come into the decoys.

Right—Mallards, preferred by many hunters and called "French ducks" in Louisiana, are a familiar sight to most Louisiana hunters although they make up less than 10 per cent of the waterfowl wintering in the state during the duck season.

Opposite Page, Top Photo—Ducks feed early in the morning and again in the afternoon. Here a flight of ducks trades back and forth across the marsh looking for a likely spot to feed in the afternoon. Below—As ducks trade back and forth across the marsh, a hunter uses his duck call to attract their attention. Skilled calling is required and unless a hunter knows how to call ducks properly it is best not to use a call at all.

Bob Dennie

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that the state depends upon the waterfowl resource as an important form of outdoor recreation as provided in hunting.

When one looks back over nearly four decades of waterfowl management that was born in the dirty thirties, there is no evidence that Louisiana duck hunters have ever pressed for seasons and bag limits that were unreasonable or contrary to the best interest of the continental waterfowl resource.

On the contrary, Louisiana has expended vast sums of money and effort on marsh management and refuge improvement to enhance and to perpetuate the waterfowl resources and the time-honored sport of duck hunting. It has done so at a state level and encouraged similar programs and activities at a private level. Without this effort, several hundred thousand acres of prime wintering habitat would have been drained and put to other land use.

In lush Louisiana where seventeen species of ducks can be found during the winter, there is less controversy over the mallard than there is in other states where the population status of the mallard is the blind indice to waterfowl regulations and management. Louisiana's stand has always been one of wise utilization of the entire waterfowl resource, rather than regulations, seasons, and bag limits hinged to the frequently miscalculated population status of a single species.

Certainly there is something special about duck hunting in Louisiana, which is the spout end of a giant funnel, the upper part of which sprawls over two-thirds of pothole and wetland habitat, mostly in Canada. It is diversified hunting in probably the most important wintering area in the United States.

Beyond that, there is little difference in motivation of Louisiana duck hunters than found in waterfowlers anywhere else. Anticipation and enthusiasm is the same.

The September teal season only sharpens anticipation of the regular duck season, yet it has served to prove that wise utilization of a segment of the waterfowl resource has in no way presented a danger to that species. On the contrary, teal populations are up this year, offering proof that the special nine-day season is not detrimental to the species.

Harvesting of a small percentage of these small ducks, that for four decades migrated to Mexico and Latin America long before the first regular duck season in this country, marked a forward step in waterfowl management. Even though the teal season has proved biologically sound, efforts to make it a reality were blocked for years, and there is still opposition to the season in some states.

As is true with duck hunters everywhere, there is deep-rooted excitement in huddling down in a duck blind before dawn and waiting with baited breath for the first tinge of that pre-dawn grayness and the sight of decoys bobbing gently at anchor. The weather may be mild or it may be cold, wet and windy, with the whistling, raw wind almost drowning out the soft sound of stroking wings overhead as ducks begin to trade back and forth looking for a place to settle down and feed.

Depending on where the duck hunting is taking place, a Louisiana waterfowler may wonder if the ducks overhead are mallards, gadwalls, baldpates, black

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ducks, wood ducks, green-winged teal, blue-winged teal that have lingered over and not migrated south of the border, pintails, scaup, ringnecks, or a stray redhead, canvasback or ruddy duck. And when it comes to shooting, he'll be grateful for some of those non-migratory mottled ducks.

This is waterfowling down where the flyways end, and while duck hunters will discuss the merits of one duck as compared to another species by the hour around the duck camp or back home after the hunt, they'll settle for a partial bag.

Yet even in this winter wonderland of waterfowl, full bag limits are not always the order of the day. There are some excellent mornings when it is comparatively easy to fill out the limit, but post-season surveys reveal that the average hunter effort results in less than a half-limit.

Left—Waterfowl on their wintering grounds. Louisiana is winter host to approximately six to seven million ducks of various species.

Center—This fortunate hunter displays part of his bag. The shooting has been good this day.

Top Right—With his daily limit partly filled, this duck hunter is using his call in an attempt to attract a few more ducks to his decoys in order to round out his bag limit.

Right—Gathering up the bag limit. There's a satisfaction to waterfowling that is more important than the full bag; however a generous bag limit is the necessary incentive for private management of habitat for waterfowling.

Opposite Page, Top—This is the sort of sight that makes waterfowling a time-honored sport and annually attracts the attention of approximately nearly 130,000 hunters in Louisiana. Below—Gathering up the day's bag and his gun, this hunter prepares to leave his blind after a successful session with fast flying ducks.

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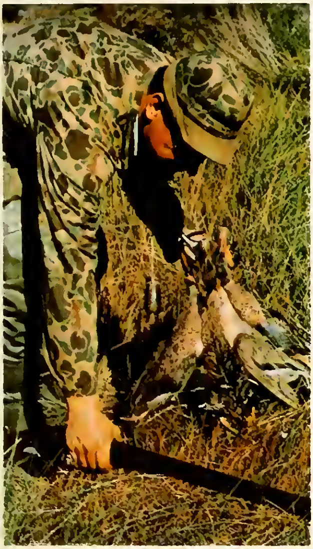


Lloyd Poissenot

It is the hunter opportunity, along with countless hours of anticipation, that attracts waterfowlers. The bag, or potential full limit is inducement, and it is this interest that results in marsh management and programs designed to enhance waterfowl habitat.

Because of a more liberal and logical bag limit, coupled with a satisfactory number of shooting days and elimination of the penalty for a split season, interest in duck hunting reached a new high in Louisiana last year.

Predicated on the sale of duck stamps, it is estimated that over 127,000 Louisiana hunters participated in some degree in last year's waterfowl season. This marked a sharp increase in hunter interest, in the neighborhood of 20,000 additional duck hunters. Figures for total national sales of duck stamps are not available, but it is estimated that they were equal to or surpassed those of 1959. Sales this year, when tabulated, will probably be greater than last year.

The peak year for duck stamp sales was in 1955 when nearly 2,400,000 were sold. It is possible that figure will be surpassed this year.

There are several important conclusions that can be drawn as a result of the past few years of duck hunting. One is that even with industrial expansion, growing populations, and increased time for outdoor recreation, the waterfowl resource is a renewable one. Its volume is contingent upon conditions in the nesting grounds, but it is also hinged to maintenance of the wintering habitat.

Accelerated activities and programs of Ducks Unlimited in Canada have also contributed greatly to waterfowl production. An aggressive 10-year program to greatly expand the Canadian projects of Ducks Unlimited is certain to enhance waterfowl production even in periods when normal nesting habitat is not at its best. The fact that duck hunters have demonstrated much greater interest in the work of Ducks Unlimited is additional proof of their desire to perpetuate the sport of duck hunting, not only for present generations but also for future generations.

It is the hope of Louisiana duck hunters that waterfowl research will be accelerated and that more accurate methods of inventorying waterfowl populations will be developed. When this is accomplished, adjustments can be made in seasons and bag limits when necessary, but curtailment only when necessary.

Maintenance of habitat continent-wide is key to perpetuation —not regulation.

As long as seasons and bag limits are determined as the result of logic backed by sound and continuing research, the fine sport of duck hunting can be perpetuated and there will always be good waterfowling down where the flyway ends. It follows that as long as there is good duck hunting in Louisiana, there will be fine sport along the flyway that terminates in a waving sea of marsh grass where hunters really care.

SHOTSHELL RELOADING

-ANYONE CAN DO IT

STORY BY FRANK J. DAVIS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LLOYD POISSENOT

If you are looking for a way to stretch the hunting dollar, you will do well to look into the practice of shotshell reloading. The procedure is easy, simple to learn, and results in products that are equally as good as factory originals. Besides, recent statistics published by gun and gunpowder manufacturers record a savings with reloading as high as fifty-eight percent of the cost of factory shells. For the hunter, this is the best news of all.

Reloading is not at all a recent innovation. Since the early Thirties hunters have been reloading their own shotgun shells. The procedures then were time consuming and tedious, but the end products were good. However, with modern machinery now on the market the entire operation has been simplified to almost a motion. Reloading equipment, which can be purchased as inexpensively as $40 for a good model, virtually eliminates the guesswork and turns out a quality product.

Don't envy the hunter who reloads his own shells. Anyone can do it! Harry D. Spence, a hunter who finds reloading the answer to a lot of additional shooting fun, said, "Anyone who can fill a thermos bottle and put the stopper in the top can reload his own shells."

The entire operation hinges on the makeup of a shotgun shell: casing, primer, powder, wad column, and shot. When you buy a box of shells you buy these components all assembled for you. Fire the shell and you are left with an empty casing, the beginning of a reload. This is where you start.

Save all your spent casings. You can buy empty casings from dealers

Above—Shotshells, yesterday and today. All except the bottom shell on the left are factory loads dating back to the mid-Forties. Factory shotgun shells of the past often contained a paper overwad which was used to hold the shot inside the hull and increase muzzle velocity. The shell on the bottom left is a reloaded shell

Opposite Page—The "fixins" of reloading—primer, gunpowder, wad column, shot, and an empty shell casing. Reloaded shells afford good performance where it counts: in the chamber of a shotgun and gun clubs but since most plastic casings can be reloaded anywhere from 10 to 20 times, you are wasting money by not saving your own hulls. It is also a good idea if you ask other hunters who do not reload to save their empty casings for you. You will be surprised how fast they add up and how they keep expenses down.

You have the casings; now all you need is a reloader. They come in two models—single stage or progressive. The single stage model, hand-operated slowly, can turn out about four boxes of reloaded shells an hour. If you do a lot of shooting, you might want to buy a progressive reloader, a more complex model that can yield as high as 600 shells an hour. Both do the same job equally as well. The only difference is in speed.

So as not to complicate the methods, let's relate the following procedures to a single stage reloader you own. Several of these steps may be combined but they are all done.

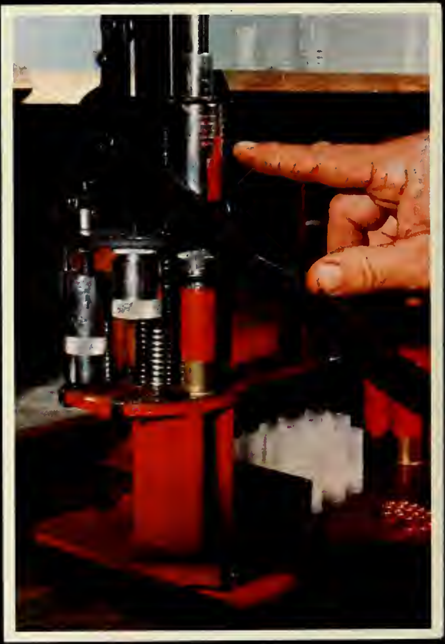
INSPECTION: Although not strictly a mechanical part of the reloading operation, inspection of the hull or casing is essentially the most important part of the procedure, safetywise. You should be sure that the hull you want to reload is not cracked, split, worn, loose at the primer, or otherwise unsafe. Reloading an unsafe hull is asking for trouble, the only trouble which reloading proposes. The remainder of the operation is free of hazard if you follow instructions carefully.

DEPRIME: The primer at the base of the shell is what ignites the gunpowder and causes it to burn rapidly, resulting in an

Below—Correct pressure on the wad column is important. Wad pressures are recommended by powder and wad manufacturers and are supplied on charts shipped with the powders. For safe reloading, these statistics must be adhered to. Gauges on the reloader measure wad pressure automatically.

Opposite Page—Resizing and depriming is part of the eight step operation of reloading shotshells. The hunter holds the casing in position as the resizing die shapes the spent hull.

Opposite Page Below—When the final step is completed, the crimped, reloaded casing is ready to fire.



explosion. Primers that are spent must be removed from the fired casing, the first part of the procedure and the first step on the reloading machine.

REPRIME: Naturally, it would follow that in order to reload the casing a new primer must be inserted in the hull base. The single stage reloader in the second step puts a new primer in the base and at the same time completely resizes the hull by means of a special die. When this operation is complete the casing technically is ready to be "reloaded".

POWDER CHARGE: The third step is adding the correct amount of gun powder to the hull. This charge, and the shot charge which is dropped in later, is what has been technically simplified. All reloading machines utilize what are called "charging bars," metal bars with exact holes cut in the top of them to allow a premeasured amount of powder and shot to drop into the casings. If the instructions are followed carefully for the use of these bars, the reloaded shell will be as safe and effective as any factory load. (There are charge bars, interchangeable with every model reloader, that can reload any grade of shell from light field load to heavy magnum.)

WAD SEATING: After the gunpowder has been dropped from the charging bar into the hull, the next step, done mechanically, is the seating of the wad. The new wad, a cup that compresses the powder and holds the lead shot, is placed over the seating die and by use of the machine's operating handle is forced down into the casing. Again, instructions are given on charts supplied by gunpowder manufacturers, which call for a certain amount of wad pressure. A gauge on the reloader sets the wad pressure called for on the charts for different types of high-powered loads. You should use this pressure and not experiment. (Incidentally, do not experiment with the quantity of gunpowder and shot, either. Use only what is recommended by the manufacturer.)

SHOT CHARGE: When the wad is seated properly it is time to put in the shot charge. Going by the specifications for various shot numbers—No. 2 to No. 9—slide the charging bar until the shot drops down through the bar hole and into the casing. You may have a bit of difficulty here, since with most single stage reloaders the bigger the shot the harder it is to slide the charge bar.

Many hunters who reload prefer to handload heavier shot like No. 2 and No. 4, since it is harder for these B-B's to fall through the charging bar hole. Check after dropping the shot to see that a one-half to nine-sixteenths inch distance exists between the top of the shot and the mouth of the casing. Unless you have this much space at the top of the casing, the shell will not crimp correctly.

BEGINNING CRIMP: When the shell is "reloaded" with the components, the next die, the next position on the reloading machine, begins the crimp to seal the shot in the hull. Check to see that the crimp is starting properly as the correct crimp is what is going to insure the watertightness of the reloaded casing.

FINAL CRIMP: The last operation, producing the finished product, is the final crimp, that step which seals the shotshell and makes it ready to fire. With experience,

Top Left—The die above the shell has started the crimp of the reload. The longer die in the next position will finish the crimp and make the shell ready for use.

Bottom Left—Once the gunpowder is in the shell, it must be capped by the wad column which is forced down on top of the gun powder to a tight fit. The inside of the wad column holds the shot, dropped in the next step of the reloading procedure.

even with a single stage reloader, the entire procedure takes but a few seconds.

Reloaders can be purchased for all gauge shotshells, and converter kits which sell for a small fraction of the cost of the reloader can be bought also to facilitate the reloading of different size hulls. All in all, the entire operation of reloading, no matter which kind you do, spells savings with a capital S.

Components—primers, wads, powder, shot—are available at nearly any and all gun shops or sporting goods stores. A box of reloads will usually cost, on the average, slightly over a dollar compared to the factory cost of $2 to $4 per box.

Experienced hunters who reload suggest usually that the novice learn a few tricks of the trade as soon as possible. For instance, paper shells, although they can be reloaded just as easily as plastic kinds, should be examined more closely than plastic. The paper hulls, it seems, can be reloaded safely as many as six times before being discarded, but with both plastic and paper shells the rule of safety is, "Whenever in doubt, throw it out!"

Another secret old timers pass on to beginners is that all hulls should be kept separated into "once fired," "twice fired," and so on. It is easier, they say, to know which hulls will soon become unsafe to reload.

Reload for your game, it is recommended. Shot No. 2 should be used for geese; No. 4, 5, or 6 for ducks; No. 2 or 4 for turkey; No. 4 through 7½ for rabbits; No. 6 through 7½ for squirrels; No. 7½, 8 or 9 for quail or doves. Remember, however, that whatever you load, load only what is prescribed in the charts. Do not alter powder or shot quantities. Too much shot or too much powder increases breech pressure.

Generally, it is wise to check that primers are not loose in the base seat. If they fit loose or show indication of gas leakage it means the primer pocket has stretched and the hull should not be used. It is also desirous to use only the wads recommended for the hulls you are reloading. Plastic wads are more efficient than paper wads and greatly increase powder burning rate, giving you better quality in the reload. Keep in mind that reloading is safe, but the persons reloading may not be. Exercise caution when handling gunpowder. Do not get distracted and do not smoke while reloading.

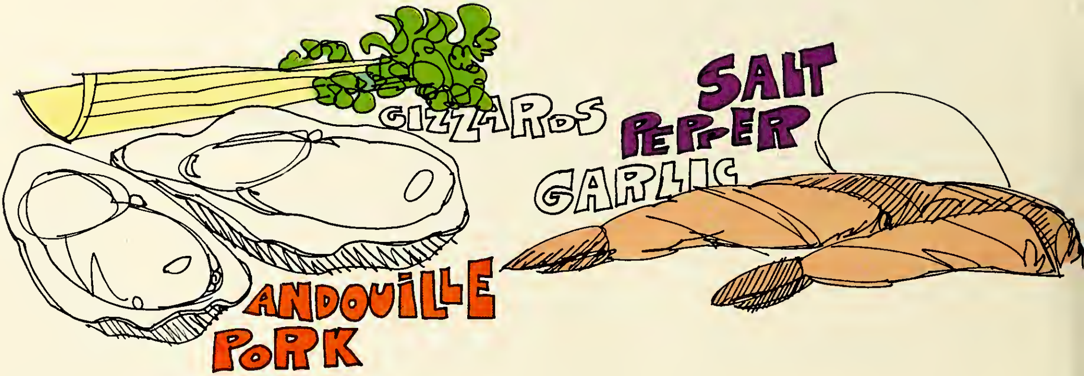
What is the best way to go about learning to reload? Buy a machine that is sufficient for your needs. If a single stage reloader will do the job, buy that one. Cost is usually nominal. Then if at all possible, buy components in bulk. If you know you are going to be shooting more shells than the average person, components purchased in bulk result in even greater savings, as much as fifty percent of the total cost of a box of factory loaded shells.

No matter how you look at it, reloaded shells get the job done, save you appreciable amounts of cash, and give you many extra shots for the money.

PHOTO BY LLOYD POISSENOT

Recipes By Leon Ricord

Young Chef Ricord has taken a few of the basic dishes from the woods and waters of Louisiana and added his magic gourmet touch to turn them into true delicacies that will thrill the taste buds.



DIRTY RICE

1 cup rice
1 teaspoon salt

Boil rice, drain in colander, set aside.

4 chicken livers
4 chicken gizzards
½ cup chopped onion
3 chopped green onions
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 tablespoons butter
1 4 oz. can mushrooms and liquid
1/3 cup cooking oil
salt and pepper to taste

Grind livers and gizzards, brown in oil, add remaining ingredients, and simmer for approximately 45 minutes or until gizzards are tender. Blend thoroughly with rice and bring back to serving temperature on low heat or place in covered casserole in oven-250 degrees.

OYSTER DRESSING

¼ lb. andouille sausage
¼ lb. pork sausage
4 dozen oysters and oyster water
6 chicken livers
6 chicken gizzards
1 4 oz. can mushrooms and liquid
1 onion
4 tablespoons green onions
2 cloves garlic
4 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 bay leaves
4 strips of celery
1 tablespoon Worchestershire sauce
1 7 oz. package Pepperidge Farm seasoned cube stuffing
pinch of thyme
salt and pepper

Set oysters aside.
Chop or grind all ingredients. In three tablespoons of butter saute andouille, pork sausage, livers and gizzards, onions, garlic, celery, parsley, bay leaf and thyme. Add Worchestershire sauce, salt, pepper, mushrooms and liquid and oyster water. Simmer for 45 minutes. Add oysters and continue to simmer for ten minutes. Add cube stuffing and blend thoroughly.

OYSTER PIE

2 unbaked pie crust shells
1 pint of oysters and oyster water
3 tablespoons cooking oil
3 level tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons chopped green onions
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 4 oz. can mushrooms and liquid (stems and pieces)
dash of Tabasco pepper sauce
salt and pepper to taste

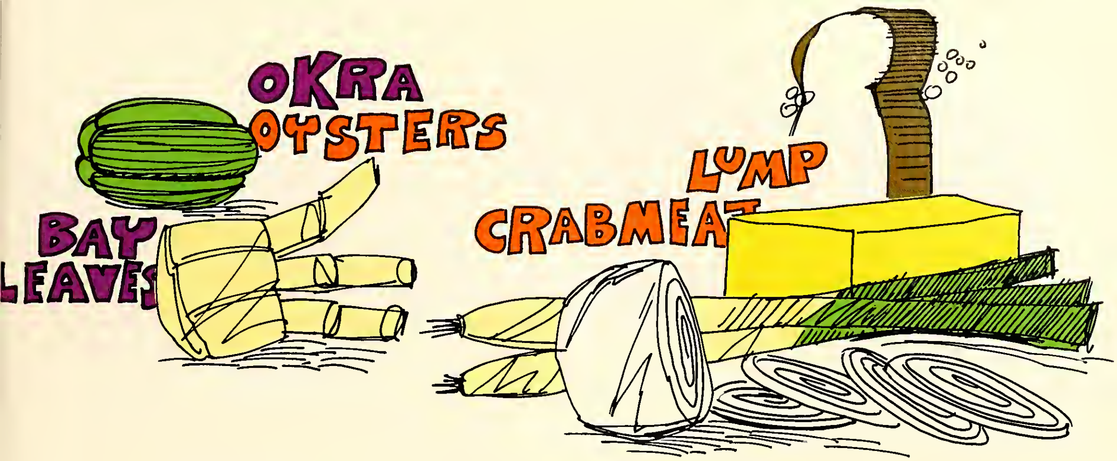
Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
In a sauce pan make roux with cooking oil and flour. Over low heat add oysters, oyster water, mushrooms and liquid, stir constantly until blended and thickened. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 5 minutes. Pour into pie crust shell and place second pie shell over filling. Seal edges and cut several slits in top. Bake on a cookie sheet for 45 minutes or until crust is brown.

OYSTER STEW

(2 servings)

12 oysters and water
2 pints milk
½ small white onion (chopped fine)
1 tsp. chopped parsley
¼ stick butter
salt and pepper

Place butter in a saute pan, and let it melt. When it starts to fry, add the onions and cook till they become tender. Then add the oysters and water, and bring to a boil. When it reaches a boil, add milk and parsley, salt and pepper and bring to a boil again and then serve.



STUFFED SHRIMP HOLLANDAISE

1½ lbs. med.-large fresh headless shrimp
1 egg
2 cups milk
1 cup flour
4 cups bread crumbs seasoned with garlic powder, salt, pepper, and parsley.
1 recipe crabmeat dressing*

Peel fresh shrimp, leaving tails on, and split down back to achieve butterfly effect. Place a small amount of dressing in each. Roll in flour and place in egg wash (a mixture of the egg and milk). Remove from egg wash and roll shrimp in seasoned bread crumbs. In palms of hands, press shrimp firmly to give them shape. Fry in deep hot grease, 325 —350 until shrimp are golden brown.
Serve shrimp on toast with Hollandaise sauce on side to dip shrimp.

SHRIMP DIP OR SPREAD

1 lb. boiled shrimp
1 small white onion
1 clove of garlic
1 teaspoon of lemon juice
½ teaspoon brown mustard
dash of salt and pepper
dash of cayenne pepper
mayonnaise

All ingredients should be chopped fine. Blend and add mayonnaise for desired thickness.

SEAFOOD GUMBO

1½ med. white onions diced med.
4 cloves garlic diced fine
3 green onions diced med.
2 med. green bell peppers diced med.
2 bay leaves
1/8 lb. margarine
3 whole clean raw crabs, broken in pieces
1 #303 can whole tomatoes
½ lb. fresh okra cleaned and sliced
¼ cup salad oil
½ cup flour
1 pt. oysters
salt and pepper
1 lb. rice cooked

In a deep pot, place green and white onions, garlic, bell pepper, bay leaves, and margarine. Cook till onions brown. Add crabs, tomatoes, and okra and cook for 10 min. Cover cooked ingredients with water plus 1 qt. more water and add shrimp. Bring to a slow boil.
In a separate iron skillet, place salad oil and heat. When hot, add flour and stir until brown. Add this to above ingredients in other pot, a little at a time until desired thickness is obtained. Add oysters and let come to a boil again. Serve over rice in a large soup bowl.

Yield: 6—8 servings

CRABMEAT DRESSING

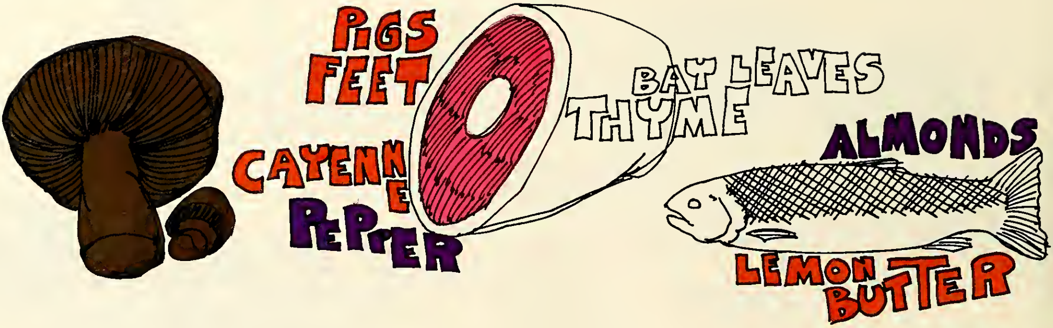
4 green onions diced fine
1 med. white onion diced fine
4 cloves garlic diced fine
¼ lb. margarine
2 bay leaves
5 tbls. flour
2 cups milk
½ lb. lump crabmeat
½ cup bread crumbs
1 egg
salt & pepper

In a medium sauce pan place chopped green and white onions, garlic, margarine, and bay leaves. Cook till onions appear clear. Add flour and blend well. Add milk and stir until a thick sauce is formed. Add salt and pepper. Fold in crabmeat carefully to keep meat in lumps. Remove from fire and add bread crumbs and egg. Set aside to cool.

TROUT AMANDINE

¼ cup salad oil
1 small package sliced almonds
juice of 1 lemon
3/4 cup butter
1 dash Lea & Perrin
¼ cup white wine
½ cup flour
4 trout filets approx. 8 oz. each

In a sauce pan place oil. Salt and pepper trout, dip both sides in flour, and place filets in hot oil. Cook about 5 min. on each side. When cooked remove filets to heated platter and discard oil. To the same skillet add butter, and heat till it browns. Remove from heat and add lemon juice, wine and Lea & Perrin. Return to fire and add almonds and cook for 1 or 2 min. till almonds brown. Spoon over trout filets and garnish with lemon wedges and parsley.



REDFISH HOLLANDAISE

2 lbs. tenderloin redfish
½ cup white wine
2 oz. lemon juice
salt
pepper
1 bay leaf
1 recipe Hollandaise sauce*

Cut fish into approximately four 8 oz. pieces. In a sauce pan, place fish and cover with water. Add wine, salt, pepper, lemon juice and bay leaf Simmer till fish is cooked, 5 to 10 minutes.
Drain cooked fish, and place in serving plate. Cover fish with Hollandaise sauce and garnish with paprika and chopped parsley.

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

4 egg yolks
1 oz. lemon juice
1 pinch each salt and cayenne pepper
2 cups drawn butter (melted butter)

In top half of double boiler, place egg yolks, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Whip the above ingredients continuously with a small wire whip until they become fluffy, being careful not to let them become hard or stick to the sides of the pan. As soon as a fluffy texture is reached, remove from fire and begin to slowly whip in the drawn butter. If sauce becomes too thick, that is, heavy like mayonnaise, add a few drops of water to achieve a smooth texture.

Yield: 4 servings

"HOG·HEAD CHEESE"

5-5½ lbs. pork (boston butt)
1½ lbs. veal shoulder
2 lbs. veal marrow bones
6 fresh or frozen pigs feet
1½ gallons water
¼ cup salt
2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
2 bunches green onions—chopped fine
1 bunch parsley—chopped fine
2 tablespoons steak sauce
1 tablespoon Kitchen Bouquet
thyme
bay leaf

Boil pork, veal, marrow bones, pigs feet, salt, thyme, and bay leaf until very tender. Remove meat from water. Chop fine. Strain water and return all chopped meat to strained liquid. Add remaining ingredients, blend thoroughly, and bring to a boil. Correct salt and pepper to desired taste. Pour into bowls and refrigerate. This can be frozen. Before serving it is necessary to heat thoroughly and mold.

ROAST SADDLE OF VENISON

1 5-6 lb. venison saddle
1 lb. larding pork (string of pork fat ¼ inch wide)
4 ounces brandy
red wine
1 onion
1 carrot

Using a larding needle, push through center of meat to opposite end, pulling fat all the way through the meat. Do this in two places on each side of middle bone of saddle.
Marinate meat for 24 hours in refrigerator, using one onion, one carrot and red wine to cover about half way. Turn meat in mixture after 12 hours. After 24 hours place saddle in roasting pan, cover top of saddle with remaining pork fat. Roast in oven 400-425 degrees for 1 to 1½ hours, depending on desired rareness. When cooked, remove saddle from pan, and place pan on open fire. Add 4 ounces of brandy (be careful of foam when pouring). Add one cup of marinade used earlier and reduce to half. Pour sauce over meat.

RABBIT STEW

2 rabbits cut into 12 pieces each
1 white onion
1 carrot-diced
1 bay leaf
½ stick of butter
red wine

Place rabbit, onion, carrot and bay leaf in a deep dish. Cover with red wine and let stand about 24 hours.
Remove pieces of rabbit and saute in hot butter until brown on both sides. Salt and pepper to taste.
Pour marinade through a strainer into pan containing the rabbit. Cover and simmer until tender.

1 white onion
1 small can mushrooms
¼ cup chopped ham

In another pan saute finely chopped onion, mushrooms, and ham. Place tender rabbit in serving dish, spoon onion, ham and mushroom mixture on top of rabbit, and then pour rabbit gravy over rabbit pieces.

CHICKEN CLEMENCEAU

(2 servings)

½ jointed chicken
1 small onion (diced)
1 small can mushrooms
1 small can peas
1 stalk green onion (chopped)
1 bay leaf
3 oz. white wine
1 small potato (diced and boiled till tender)
½ stick butter
salt and pepper

In a saute pan, place the butter to melt over low heat. When butter starts to turn brown, place chicken piece, which has been salt and peppered, and brown well. When chicken is brown enough, remove from the pan, and add onions, white and green, and mushrooms. Cook until onions are tender, add one bay leaf and place the chicken back in the pan, then add white wine. Cook over low heat until chicken is done, then add peas, and potatoes. Cook for about 5 more minutes, then serve.

FRUIT CAKE

8 eggs
1 lb butter
1 lb. sugar
1 lb. plain flour
1 lb. raisins
½ lb citron
1 lb. cystallized pineapple
1 lb. crystallized cherries
3 lbs. dates
1 lb. shelled pecans
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon cloves
1 cup cane syrup
4 tablespoons whiskey or brandy

Make batter with sugar, butter, eggs, whiskey or brandy, allspice, cloves, syrup, soda and half (½) of the flour which has been sifted. Beat until smooth.
In a large pan mix chopped nuts and chopped fruit, sift remaining flour over fruit and nuts, mix thoroughly until fruit and nuts are coated with flour. Pour batter over fruit and nut mixture, blend thoroughly.
Pour into greased loaf pans lined with waxed paper. Bake in 300 degree oven approximately two hours and 20 minutes. Makes three, three pound loaf cakes.

FLOURISHING FORESTS THREATEN WILDLIFE

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
J. W. FARRAR AND LOUIS BRUNETT

Something serious is threatening the deer habitat in Louisiana's 16,000,000 acres of forest lands. A sizeable portion of the 8,000,000-plus acres of pine and pine-hardwoods has already taken a turn for the worse. This phantom has crept over every foot of forest land, slowly, silently and largely unrecognized by the untrained eye. With it has come great changes with far reaching effects.

Another one of those foreign diseases?

No, it's something the biologists call forest succession, which is simply the growing up or maturing of the forest.

This is not always bad, for it was succession which set the stage for the development of the deer herds we have today. Heavy logging operations during World War II and several years thereafter, opened up the timber stands thereby permitting the development of lush undergrowth needed by deer for food and cover. Several years before, reforestation of thousands of acres of barren lands had begun. Also, with the steady abandonment of rural areas which continues even today, old fields and pastures grew up into trees and brush and much of our state soon reverted back to forest land. Most of the forests were young and timber management by the lumber companies and other land owners was such that a large portion of the lands remained in the brush stages providing prime deer habitat.

The timely stocking of deer by the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission in these excellent deer ranges together with the protection afforded by cooperative sportsmen and landowners, resulted in one of the greatest success stories in the history of conservation.

Although we still enjoy the benefits of expanding deer herds today, the situation is beginning to change. In the same way that forest succession contributed so much to the building of the deer herds, in a large portion of our forests it is now one of the most adverse factors. Much of the forest land has grown to maturity and forest management practices have begun to change. Thousands of acres of natural and reforested piney woods have grown up and the maturing pines have choked out the understory needed for good deer production. The same situation applies to cottonwood plantations in the delta bottomland hardwoods where land clearing for agriculture also continues at a steady pace. Wide scale pine reforestation stemming from the Land Bank Program and similar government programs of the 1950's and early 1960's is by now well on its way to maturing another big chunk of our deer factory out of production.

Perhaps one of the better known changes in forest management is Timber Stand Improvement, commonly referred to as T.S.I. operations. It provides us with a close look at succession and the way man has accelerated it, and has already caused considerable discussion among hunters as well as professional wildlife people.

The objective in T.S.I. is to eliminate hardwoods and brush in order to establish pine. Unfortunately the hardwoods mentioned are important to wildlife since many such as oaks, beech, and hickory are mast producers. As we all know the oak mast (acorns) is relished by deer and the mast of practically all hardwoods is important food for squirrel and wild turkey. Most often a wide variety of deer-browse plants also occur in this very ordinary brush. Today, however, primarily in name of pine produc-

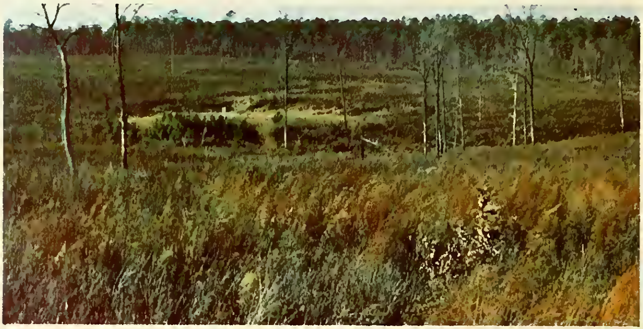
Opposite Page—In many stands of longleaf pine site quality and closure of overstory prohibits growth of plants beneficial to wildlife. *Below*—Prime wildlife habitat of a small stream bottom recently cleared to establish pine.

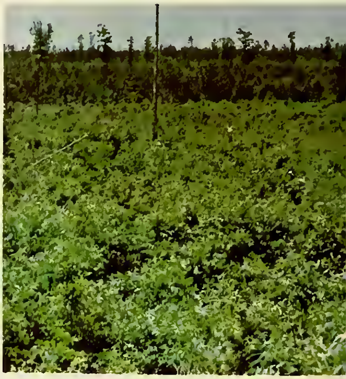
tion, a large number of land owners have killed out the hardwoods and brush on vast acreages of timber land.

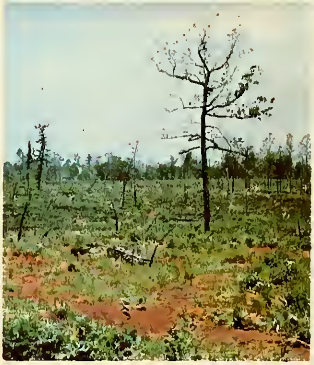
The process usually involves creating a frill around the base of the plant or at a convenient height to the laborer and applying a chemical herbicide to this fresh wound; an herbicide that will kill the plant. Today a tree injector incorporating this simple technique is most commonly used. In some areas, however, powerful herbicide sprays and mists have been used to kill the existing understory in order that pine seedlings may be underplanted or to "release" natural pine seedlings that may be present; the herbicide generally killing the broadleaf plants and not the pine.

After the hardwoods are killed, pine are direct seeded by aircraft or pine seedlings are set out, providing of course that sufficient natural stock is not already there, in which case the T.S.I. operation would simply release them from competition and stimulate vigorous growth and rapid establishment. The "deadening" of hardwoods and brush allows sunlight to reach the forest floor which stimulates plant growth. The hardwoods and brush may sprout at the root collar or other plants may come in and, along with the pine, will be stimulated to put on luxuriant growth. In this stage of succession, or change, deer-browse is in abundance and will remain this way for three or four years. By then, however, the pines with their faster growth rate usually have over-topped the brush and the stage is set for another change. As this growth is continued the brush or understory is subjected to increased shading. Although several factors such as soil fertility and soil moisture govern how long an area has a productive understory, available sunlight is perhaps the most important factor. By the sixth year the pines usually are tall enough and their tops so dense that a large portion of the sunlight to the forest floor is cut off. The understory then rapidly disappears until practically nothing is left on the forest floor for deer and other wildlife.

By the eighth year the area is generally low on deer-browse and usually by the tenth year the resulting pine thicket will not support any of our native game ani-



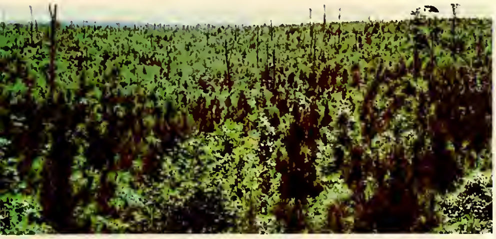




Upper Left—End of first growing season after clearing; annual grasses and legumes provide quail habitat, but no understory means the area is a loss for forest game. Depression in foreground is a remnant of a small stream bottom. *Upper Right*—First growing season following clearing finds this area with sprouts and developing brush. It provides some use for deer but can not yet meet the total needs for a herd. However, such areas often provide good quail hunting for a short time. *Lower center*—Second growing season after clearing; understory is developing but still not sufficient to meet the year round needs for deer. Note older pine stand in background. In a short time both tracts will be lost to wildlife production for many years.

mals. This situation remains until the stand reaches sufficient size to thin for pulpwood, usually at age 18, though sometimes sooner. On the average then, only about five out of 18 years are productive for deer. When browse is in abundance the deer herd responds well with a rapid increase. At its best such an area may be able to support a deer per 15 or 20 acres and at its worst stage, with little or no understory, it may not support more than one deer per 200 or 250 acres. The degree that understory conditions will be improved by the renewed timber cutting depends on how heavy the stand is thinned and how regular it is cut in the coming years. A look at past forest management practices has shown that generally the heavier the thinning and the more often cutting can be permitted, the better it is for deer. Management practices so far have generally fallen short in both categories and any temporary benefits gained were soon lost to increased growth and vigor of the pine stand.

It appears that modern forestry practices will also lean more toward even age management of pure pine stands on large land blocks. Plantation type reforestation with genetically improved seed stock will be the way of the future. When the stand reaches the desired stage of maturity the entire timber crop will be cut and the whole process repeated. To complete this cycle anywhere from 15 to 80 years may be required depending upon the wood products desired. Already thousands of acres in blocks ranging from 160 to well over 1,000 acres, have been stripped of existing timber, bulldozed, chopped, or burned clean and then seeded or planted with pine. The small stream bottoms which have historically supported hardwoods are now the main targets. They provide a last and most critical retreat for game within the great sea of pine. This method provides for easier conversion of these here-to-fore difficult areas to convert to pure pine stands. Established timber stands are being managed in such a manner as to bring them more into line with even age management. This type of forest management with the



Upper left—Four year old stand of pine topped out over the brush. The stage is set for a change in which the understory will gradually be shaded out. Dead trees in background were once mass producers for wildlife. *Lower left*—An eight year old stand in which the understory is nearly gone. *Above*—An older pine stand with the understory completely gone is of little value for wildlife. In this manner forestry interests have "improved" many out of a place to hunt.

large acreages involved promises to multiply wildlife management problems.

The vegetative pattern of such a developing timber stand particularly as it relates to wildlife, is nearly identical to that of a T.S.I. operation. When the overstory of trees is opened up or cleared away sunlight reaches the forest floor and stimulates the production of a lush thicket of undergrowth. Pine seeds are sown or seedlings planted, however, soon after the clearcut and site preparation. In the following years the pines will outgrow, over-top and choke out other vegetation. These new areas become productive for quail and rabbits after the first year but are lost for forest game such as deer, squirrel and wild turkey. It takes three years or more for the development of an understory sufficient to maintain a productive deer herd. Deer can come on strong, however, as soon as the understory develops but quail then fade out. Though we are keenly and justifiably concerned for the deer's welfare under such a program, he may actually be the least affected, which doesn't speak very well for the future of other forest game.

So, if that favorite deer stand has now opened enough for you to make a good rifle shot but they just don't seem to cross there anymore, that is probably the basic problem as we have discussed. If the deer seem scarce, take a look at the condition of the woods and you will be surprised how poorly productive of deer many areas have grown in only the last few years. Closing the season or restocking is of no use, the problem is a new version of an old one—that of changing land use and man's alteration of the environment. History records that since the beginning of time no other single factor has had as great an effect on wildlife populations as has changing land use patterns.

The solution to our particular problem lies in better integration of forestry and wildlife management. Most forest lands are private property belonging to companies and individuals who may kill the hardwoods, grow pine trees to the exclusion of everything else, clear it for agriculture or otherwise use it for pleasure or profit as so desired. Unknown to many, the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission or any other public

Above—Clearing for agriculture in the Delta bottomland hardwoods results in a permanent loss of some of the State's most productive wildlife habitat.

Upper Right—A close look at a T. S. I. deadened hardwood.

Lower Right—Hardwoods given T. S. I. treatment to release pine. Dead oaks in background once produced mast for forest game.

agency has no voice in such action except through requested game management advice on some occasions, which may be used or rejected as the owners wish. This is rightfully so, however, for in order to keep America a free country the disposition of private property must remain solely with its owner. In this regard it is apparent that time has brought more than natural forest succession into the big picture of hunting in Louisiana. Where genuine concern for good public relations once prompted timber companies and other large land owners to allow their woodlands to remain open to public hunting, today the trend is definitely toward commercialization of hunting rights. Leasing to hunting clubs or some pay-as-you-go system is spreading fast. The Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission joins with thousands of sportsmen in expressing a sincere thanks to those landowners who still allow public hunting on their lands.

Many landowners will find it necessary to make a considerable turn from the straight and narrow of maximum wood production now practiced, if they are to have a hunting resource to commercialize on. In many localities it's rather late already for a generation of trees and a generation of young hunters must pass before hunting will be worthwhile again. On public lands such as our National Forests this need not be the case, for according to the Multiple Use Act of 1960 maximum timber production must not be the management goal. Every sportsman and citizen should insist that this multiple-use concept be adhered to strictly and preservation and management of wildlife be given equal billing with timber, grazing and other interests, which often enough has not been the case.

It is apparent to wildlife managers that considerable change has occurred in overall deer habitat conditions for the state and more is expected. In addition if there is not an awakening to the needs of deer and other forest game, whether for profit or public relations, and a resulting change in some of the present forest management practices, we can most certainly expect significant changes in the big picture of deer populations and deer hunting in the near future.

Left—When hardwoods are deadened, sunlight reaches the forest floor, stimulating the development of lush undergrowth; a bonanza for deer for about four years. *Above*—The desired result of T. S. I. is a vigorous growth of "released" pine which will ultimately destroy the understory.

Lower Left—Benefits derived from renewed timber cutting is often short lived. Increased growth of pine has again prevented development of an understory.

A. W. Palmisano

ibises in louisiana

by A. W. Palmisano

Bob Dennie

Louisiana owes its abundant and diverse wildlife resources, in large part, to its unique geographic location. The tributaries and distributaries of North America's largest river system converge within Louisiana's alluvial valley. Upon finally reaching the coast, the Mississippi River discharges its fresh water and fertile sediment along the continental shelf to form extensive areas of swamp and marshland. The states southerly location and proximity to the gulf result in a moderate climate suitable for many species of subtropical plants and animals. Water birds are especially abundant along the coast and one group of wading birds, which are of particular interest, are the ibises.

Five different species of ibis (pronounced eye-bis) have been recorded here although one, the wood ibis, is actually a stork and not a true ibis. All are characterized by long downwardly curved bills and, unlike the herons and egrets, carry their necks fully outstretched in flight.

The wood ibis, or gourdhead, is much larger than the true ibises and is pure white except for its legs, black tail, wing tips and head and neck. They occur in Louisiana during the summer months often in flocks of 10 or more individuals. There are no known breeding records of the wood ibis in Louisiana since 1918.

An interesting tale has evolved regarding this bird and its effects on fish populations. The head of the wood ibis is naked, wrinkled and scaley. It often perches on limbs over water and scratches its head with its foot. Stories are told that the "dandruff" which falls from the birds head into the water is poisonous to the fish in the lake. As far as I know, this tale has no basis in fact.

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The white ibis, locally known as "bec-croche", is a true ibis and is much smaller than the wood ibis. It lacks the black tail and head but does have black wing tips. During the breeding season, the face, bill and legs are bright red. The one year old young white ibis appear much darker than the adults, having dark brown wings in contrast with their white under parts.

The white ibis breeds in the southern portion of the United States from South Carolina throughout the gulf coast states and into Mexico, Central and South America. They winter along the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Mexico southward. Although white ibises exhibit some seasonal movements, they are essentially permanent residents over most of their range.

In Louisiana the white ibis has been recorded on several occasions in late summer from the vicinity of Wallace Lake in the northwestern part of the state. They are common in the Baton Rouge area from March through October, but absent during the winter. White ibises are abundant in the coastal marshes and swamps at all seasons.

The scarlet ibis, a close relative of the white ibis, is bright scarlet red except for its black wing tips and pink face and feet. John J. Audubon claims to have seen three of these spectacular birds north of Baton Rouge in 1821. The next sighting came 150 years later, in late March, 1971, when a flock of twelve scarlet ibises were reported near Marsh Island, Louisiana. Attempts to verify this report were unsuccessful. These are the only two sightings of this species from the state.

The other two species of ibis found in the state are the glossy ibis and the white-faced ibis. Both are very dark colored birds and appear black at a distance. They are so similar that ornithologists have had difficulty distinguishing one species from the other.

The glossy ibis is primarily an Old World bird ranging from southern Europe, through Africa east to India. Ancient Egyptians apparently considered the bird sacred since it frequently appears in their art work. In the Western Hemisphere, they breed throughout Florida and as far North as New Jersey. Scattered breeding has been reported from as far west as Texas. It is a permanent resident over most of its range, but there are numerous reports of wandering individuals outside their normal range.

Reports from the early 1900's indicate the bird was rare in Florida but expanding its range. Recent records from the northern gulf coast indicate a similar trend. Like the well established cattle egret, the glossy ibis may be a relatively recent arrival in the New World.

The breeding range of the white-faced ibis extends from California, Utah and Texas southeast to Louisiana. Breeding has been recorded in Florida but is considered very rare. They breed throughout Mexico, Central and South America where suitable wetland habitat exists. The white-faced ibis is migratory only in the northern part of its breeding range and winter as far north as coastal Louisiana and Texas.

Publications dealing with the status of the white-faced and glossy ibis in Louisiana are confusing and, in many instances, conflicting. Some writers felt that both species occurred here and some referred to only a single species. The problem results from the accurate identification of the two species and is further complicated by possible changes in their distributional patterns. The adult white-faced ibis is distinguishable during the breeding season by the white *feathers* surrounding the face. The degree of white marking varies and is not always obvious in some individuals. This diagnostic feature is present for only a few months from early April to July. Young of the year and adult birds during the non-breeding season are almost impossible to identify from plumage characteristics. By very careful scrutiny with a telescope or pair of binoculars, they can be identified by the color of the facial skin, the eyes or legs.

The white-faced ibis has maroon-grey legs, reddish-maroon facial skin and a red eye. In contrast, the glossy ibis has gray legs, light gray facial skin and a brown iris. These characteristics are not always reliable for separating one year old or younger birds.

A reasonable determination of the present status of these birds can be made from available information and recent field observations. The white-faced ibis is abundant in the marshes of Cameron and

Opposite Page, Top—White Ibis often nest on mangrove islands in the coastal marshes. Below—White-faced Ibis is the most common "dark" Ibis that occurs in Louisiana.

Left—One-year-old White Ibis appear much darker than the adults. The adult plumage is attained when the birds are two years old.

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Right—Adult glossy Ibises have brown eyes and light grey facial skin but no white feathers surrounding the face. Left—One-week-old White-faced Ibis. Lower Left—Ibis nest in black mangrove. Normal clutch is three or four eggs. Lower Right—Five-week-old White Ibis. At this age they are capable of feeding for themselves and making short distance flights about the rookery.

Vermilion parishes. A survey conducted in February, 1971, indicated that approximately 100,000 white-faced ibises occurred in this area. They nest in the fresh water marshes of the Big Burn and in scattered rookeries throughout the area. The bird is common in southeastern Louisiana, but not as abundant as in the southwest part of the state. The white-faced ibis is presently known to nest as far east as Black Bay near Breton Sound.

The glossy ibis is a very rare bird in southwestern Louisiana and uncommon in the southeast. It presently nests among the white-faced ibises in the Black Bay rookery and in the rookeries located in Barataria Bay. In a nesting site located near Grand Terre Island, approximately 10 percent of the "dark" ibises identified were glossy ibises. They are more difficult to identify since they lack the diagnostic white facial feathers.

Louisiana appears to be the only state where both species breed regularly in the same rookery. This may not appear very significant, but consider what this means to a student of evolution and bird geography.

Since the birds are practically indistinguishable, they must be very closely related. They probably evolved from the same ancestral stock and the Old World was undoubtedly their original home. The white-faced ibis crossed the Atlantic, first, many years ago and became well established in the New World. In time they changed, but since they were separated from the Old World species, they developed

Time had apparently changed the birds enough so that when they met, they were strangers. Recent studies show that, although they breed only a few feet apart in the rookeries, they are reproductively isolated—they do not interbreed. They may be physically capable of breeding and rearing young, but their different "cultures" and behavior patterns prevented them from pairing. What was once a single species, through time and reproductive isolation, had become two. From now on, each species will develop independently.

Ibises are colony nesters and often share rookeries with egrets and herons. There are large rookeries in Florida inhabited by over 100,000 white Ibises. Ibis nests are made of sticks or stems of grasses and seges. They are usually constructed on the branches of trees or small shrubs. In inland swamps, buttonbush thickets are a favorite nesting site of the white Ibis and black mangrove islands are often used along the coast. Birds may nest on the ground when suitable nest sites are lacking.

In Louisiana, the first nesting cycle begins in April. The clutch consists of 3 or 4 eggs. Incubation lasts 21 days and both parents share in the incubation and care and feeding of the young. At five weeks the young can fly about the rookery and feed for themselves.

Most of the young have left the nesting area by early June and a second nesting cycle begins at this time. It is believed that these are birds which lost their nests or young during the first nesting cycle. This second nesting period usually ends by late July concluding nesting activity for that year.

Oddly enough their greatest enemies during the nesting period are their own neighbors in the rookery. Boat-tailed grackles, fish crows and Black-crowned night herons commonly feed on unattended eggs and young Ibises.

Ibises are gregarious feeders. White Ibises often form huge feeding flocks of thousands of birds. Though not as spectacular, the glossy and white-faced Ibises also feed in flocks. Birds may travel over 50 miles from the roosts to the feeding grounds. They feed in shallow water in marshes, along the borders of lakes and in flooded agricultural fields. Food generally consists of crustacea, cutworms, insect larvae, grasshoppers, fish, frogs, snakes, crabs, snails and earthworms. Studies in Florida indicate that crustacea comprise about 50% of the diet, grasshoppers about 25%, cutworms about 15% and snakes, mostly cottonmouths, about 10%. In the salt marshes, young birds often feed on fiddler crabs in the shallow water surrounding the rookery.

A. W. Palmisano

In all, the Ibises are an interesting family of birds and contribute much to the diversity and abundance of Louisiana's wildlife.

Opposite Page—Adult White Ibis in breeding plumage with bright red face, base of bill and legs.

Photo by Bob Dennie